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ABSTRACT

In its original formulation, dissonance reduction was postulated as a mode for resolving behavior-attitude discrepancies. One mode of resolution has been demonstrated in the forced compliance paradigm, whereby a subject rectifies a counterattitudinal behavior with an actual belief, resulting in moderating beliefs. A forced compliance situation was used to investigate the influence of the experimenter on a subject's performance of a counterattitudinal behavior which satisfied the expectations of an attitude moderation study. Male undergraduates (N=33) were divided into three groups. The Standard Dissonance group was induced to choose to perform a counterattitudinal behavior; the Statement Condition group was similarly induced, but was thanked by the experimenter for performing the counterattitudinal behavior; and the Control group provided attitudes but did not engage in counterattitudinal behavior. Results indicated greater attitude change in the Dissonance condition than in the Statement Condition. (Author/NRB)

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IMPRESSION-MANAGEMENT IN THE FORCED COMPLIANCE PARADIGM

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In its original formulation, dissonance reduction was postulated as a mode of resolving behavior-attitude discrepancies. One mode of resolution has been reliably demonstrated in the forced compliance paradigm in which a subject must rectify his counterattitudinal behavior with his actual belief. This results in moderating beliefs. The effect has been demonstrated to depend on free choice, negative consequences and Public behavior. According to Collins and Hoyt, a counterattitudinal behavior which is freely undertaken and has negative consequences leads to a feeling of personal responsibility which in turn arouses psychological discomfort. Attitude change reduces this aversive cognitive state. The impression-management interpretation of this effect is that attitude statements by subjects are verbal tactics used to create as favorable an identity to the experimenter as the prevailing conditions allow. Thus, subjects' responses to attitude scales in forced compliance studies are not viewed as honest revelations of the subjects' private

views but are believed to represent impression-management concerns. For impression-management theory attitude change in forced compliance studies is mediated by subjects' concerns about the kinds of attributions the experimenter may make regarding them. The subject assumes that the experimenter perceives him as freely undertaking a counterattitudinal behavior that has negative consequences, and that the experimenter holds him responsible. Attributed freedom and attributed responsibility arouse embarrassment in the subject for having his identity as a benevolent and consistent person disrupted. The subject then changes his attitude as the only means available to him to restore a positive identity.

If, as impression-management theory posits, a critical factor in mediating attitude change in the forced compliance paradigm is the subjects' perception that the experimenter holds them responsible for their behavior then, if subjects could be made to feel the experimenter assumes responsibility for their behavior, subjects' fears about receiving a negative evaluation from the experimenter would be eliminated and no attitude change should occur. Also, if the experimenter were to thank the subject for assisting him in his work by performing the counterattitudinal behavior then from the subjects' point of view, the experimenter should already see him in a positive light, therefore, no compelling need to establish a positive identity should exist and no attitude change would occur. From a dissonance perspective, if subjects privately accept responsibility for the counterattitudinal behavior, any statement made by the experimenter after

the subjects engage in the counterattitudinal behavior should not relieve the subjects of their mental discomfort, and attitude moderation should occur. Post advocacy, the subjects would still be confronted with the dissonant cognitions "I believe X" and "I advocated not-X." Thus, while impression-management would predict less attitude moderation in conditions where the experimenter makes a statement to the subject assuming responsibility for the subject's action than in conditions where the experimenter makes no statement, dissonance theory would predict an equal amount of attitude moderatior in both conditions.

These hypotheses were investigated in a three-group design. Two-thirds of the subjects were induced to "freely choose" to perform a counterattitudinal behavior. Subjects were then told either that the experimerter appreciated their willingness to help him out and that he realized the counter-attitudinal behavior might not reflect their true attitudes, or were told nothing. Subsequently, subjects' attitudes were measured. The third condition was a control condition in which subjects provided their attitudes but did not engage in counterattitudinal behavior.

METHOD

Subjects

Thirty-three (33) male introductory psychology students were randomly assigned to the three cells of the design (n = 11 per cell).

Procedures

The issue used concerned students' allotment of campus

parking spaces, specifically, "Students should have convenient and enough parking places on campus." Attitudes were assessed on a seven-point scale from zero (0), completely disagree, to seven (7), completely agree.

Subjects were met by an experimenter and were conducted to a small room equipped with a Sony tape recorder. Once in the room, the experimenter explained that he was preparing materials for a study on persuasion and wanted the subject to assist him.

The standard dissonance producing manipulations of free choice and negative consequences occurred in all experimental conditions. Subjects were asked to record a number of arguments on a Sony audio-tape recorder, outlining why students who drove their cars long distances to campus should be excluded from parking these cars near the campus building, and instead be allocated parking spaces some distance from the campus. Subjects were told these tapes would be played to the relevant university committee and in the introductory psychology classrooms later that semester. In relation to this they were told that our interest was in the long-term effects of these arguments on attitude change, thus the importance of the subject's not talking to anyone about the experiment for the duration of the year was emphasized, and a promise of silence was extracted. Students identified themselves on the tape by their name, hometown, psychology class and major. They then presented the arguments. Following counterattitudinal advocacy the recording was played

back to the subject, and the experimenter thanked half the subjects for making the tape for him. The subject then filled out a questionnaire which was presented as a rough draft of the one to be used later in the classroom. The questionnaire was roughly typed and the word "draft" was pencilled in across the top. In the central group subjects' attitudes were assessed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A planned comparison on the attitude measure between the Statement and the No-Tape Control Condition was nonsignificant. Therefore, the Statement and the No-Tape Control Condition were combined and compared to the No Statement Condition. This comparison was significant at the .01 level. Means are reported in Table 1.

These results indicate that the attitude expressions of subjects in this situation were dictated by the concerns of subjects for presenting a positive identity to the experimenter rather than a dispassionate description of cognitions. Subjects who heard a statement by the experimenter assuming responsibility for thier counterattitudinal behavior did not reveal attitudes any different from control subjects who did not engage in counterattitudinal behavior. Experimental subjects who were not thanked by the experimenter for the favor of taping a counterattitudinal statement did demonstrate a significant moderation effect following counterattitudinal behavior.

These results do not appear to be readily interpretable

by dissonance theory, as it is presently constituted. It is not clear why an experimenter thanking a subject for engaging in behavior should alter an individual's self-attribution of responsibility for that behavior.

Table 1

Means for Measure of Attitude Change

Condition		
Statement	No Statement	Control
6.09a	4.06b	6.80a

NOTE: The higher the number, the more in favor of adequate parking (scale 1 tc 7). Means without a common subscript differ at p .05 or better, according to a priori contrasts.

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